

BEST

Building Employment Supports & Training



Program Guide

Prepared by Max Ryser

Tempe's BEST Program Coordinator

Updated Winter 2021

Preface:

This program guide is intended for internal use by BEST administration and City of Tempe staff who work with BEST. It is both administrative and informative in that it provides and overview of the BEST program design and its procedures. For city staff who require guidance involving matters not covered in this guide or are outside of the scope of the program, they are to consult with their supervisor or the BEST Program Coordinator.

Tempe's BEST Program Guide

Introduction: Tempe's BEST Program

The purpose of the Tempe's Building Employment Supports and Training (BEST) program is to increase work and cultural diversity in the City of Tempe by helping facilitate the hiring of six individuals with neurodiverse abilities. Neurodiverse means to have a developmental disability, such as autism or cerebral palsy.

It does not mean that anyone who has one is less capable than the next person. Employment of individuals with neurodiverse abilities has been historically low. The city seeks to reverse this by setting an example for other municipalities to hire qualified applicants with neurodiverse abilities. BEST works with partners in identifying referrals to help individuals apply and interview for jobs with the City of Tempe.

Added benefits are made available to qualified individuals who look for jobs with the City of Tempe. They include job searching, on-site support (e.g., job coaching), financial counseling, and one-on-one program orientation. These supports help new hires succeed on the job and promote relationships between them and other city staff.



BEST Program Model

A visual of the program is provided here. Each column contains the individual components that comprise the model. This is meant to help city staff visualize how the program works and understand what is involved with each box represented in the model.

Building	Employment	Supports	Training
Friends of Tempe Partnerships & Friends	You got the job Competitive Opportunities	We Welcome You as you Are Cultural/Linguistic	We are so glad you're here BEST Orientation
Begin at the End Evaluation, Metrics & Reporting	Discover Your Genius Job Themes	To Your Benefit Money & Benefit Counseling	Getting to know all about you 1:1 Training
Tempe wants you Inviting Applicants Selection/Referral	Listen & Learn Informational Sessions	What to do Policies, Practices & Procedures	Embrace the Dis' Awareness Training
Practice makes Perfect Refinements	Your way works Show & Tell	What you need Universal Design Accommodations	Tempe Culture Employee's Cultural Training
Best & Final Create the BEST Program Model	Try, Try Again Observation Opportunities	Work longer Competitive Promotions	BEST Workgroup Workgroup Cultural Training
Share the Wealth Marketing the Model	Work Smarter Job Skill Training & Work Supports	Getting There Transportation Support	Classy Tempe City Training classes for Emp.

(Graphic of BEST Program Model.)

Building

- *Friends of Tempe* – building partnerships with other agencies and developing common agreements to collaborate and provide support for BEST applicants.
- *Begin at the End* – apply what has been learned from the BEST program from evaluations and metrics after initial efforts of the program are finished.
- *Tempe wants you* – recruiting applicants to apply for jobs and become city employees through a competitive process with support from BEST.

- *Practice makes Perfect* – if something doesn't work, the BEST program will make refinements until it works for both applicants and the City of Tempe.
- *Best & Final* – create and finalize the program model by carrying its vision out, which is to increase diversity and disability awareness in Tempe with new hires.
- *Share the Wealth* – present on the program and how the model can work. Part of the goal of the BEST program is to be a model for other cities elsewhere.

Employment

- *You got the job* – competitive opportunities for jobs are available.
- *Discover your Genius* – process in where applicants are interviewed, and their strengths and skills are identified to ensure appropriate jobs to apply for.
- *Listen and learn* – an opportunity for a program applicant to meet with a city staff or a qualified professional familiar with an identified career and ask questions to learn more about the career field.
- *Your way works* – when appropriate, use the Show and Tell strategy during job interviews, which focuses on showing interviewers samples of past work. The BEST Coordinator can help program applicants prepare their samples.
- *Try, Try Again* – program applicants can shadow staff for a time to learn about a career and position within the City. These observational opportunities can help applicants in deciding if they would want to apply for a similar job. They can envision themselves in different roles before deciding what to do.
- *Work Smarter* – if hired, BEST employees can get job training or work supports (e.g., job coaching) to help them work smarter and be more likely to succeed.

Supports

- *We Welcome You as You Are* – the City will work to broaden and modernize its approach to be mindful of potential hires of individuals with disabilities. This touches on cultural and linguistic aspects of disability.
- *To Your Benefit* – BEST works with an outside partner to provide financial counseling to help applicants make decisions about the effect of income, working, and their goals to maintain their benefits or become more independent.
- *What to do* – BEST will work with Human Resources to make Tempe’s policies, practices, and procedures more disability-friendly to promote inclusive hiring.
- *What you need* – BEST will assist city staff in understanding how to provide reasonable accommodations, such as job coaching.
- *Work longer* – competitive promotions are possible for BEST employees.
- *Getting There* – BEST will help applicants and employees understand how to use transportation options and coordinate other support for people in getting to their shifts on time (e.g., having a transportation coach).

Training

- *We are so glad you’re here* – after an applicant is hired, they go through BEST orientation to understand more about BEST and be aware of support options; this includes setting up a support plan for them.
- *Getting to know all about you* – this involves an optional one-on-one training with the BEST hire to ensure a smooth transition going from being an applicant to an actual employee of the City of Tempe and joining the labor force.
- *Embrace the Dis’* – city-wide training provided to educate city staff about disability awareness and linguistic competence. This is part of the BEST program’s larger goal to expand inclusivity and diversity in Tempe.
- *Tempe Culture* – onboarding provided by hiring departments.

- *BEST Workgroup* – training new hires’ immediate workgroups and their supervisor. Topics are meant to support everyone working together.
- *Classy Tempe* – new hires engage in available city training as other city employees would; this promotes inclusiveness and greater understanding.

Program Criteria for Acceptance

Individuals who apply for the BEST program will be considered “applicants,” and not full program “participants” until they are hired by the City of Tempe. This is an important distinction, as applicants and participants are eligible for different benefits. See below:

Applicant Benefits	Participant Benefits
Assisted job searches and guidance	Job coaching and assistance
Facilitation of applications and interviews	On-site support from BEST staff
Information and referral	One-on-one training from BEST
Resume reviews and feedback	Workgroup-focused training
Practice Interviews and guidance	Follow-up support for workgroups
Financial Counseling (group and referrals)	Coordination of services
Discovery process (part of intake)	<i>(Plus, all the benefits applicants receive)</i>

To be eligible as an applicant for the BEST program, individuals:

- Must be 18 years or older (no applicants under 18 will be accepted)
- Need to have at least a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma
- Must have a developmental disability (DD; see below)
- Need to be able to pass a hiring background check and drug test
- Should be a client of vocational rehabilitation (VR) under the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) with an active case (currently receiving services)
 - Non-government DD-focused agencies are also eligible to make referrals
 - These agencies’ referrals should **preferably** have an open case with VR

- If with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) only, need to be a VR client
- **Please note:** Non-VR applicants can still apply with a referral from a DD-focused agency. These applicants **may need** to apply for VR **after** applying for BEST.

Important: Applicants must meet the federal definition of “developmental disability” from the Developmental Disability Act of 2000. It is: “a severe, chronic disability that occurs before an individual is 22 years old that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency”.

Disabilities may include but are not limited to:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Down Syndrome
- Asperger’s Syndrome
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

(BEST welcomes all applications. If an applicant has DDD services and requires on-site supports, a referral to VR will be required. In the meantime, DDD can provide funding.)

Program Policies: Guiding Principles and Expectations

Applicants and participants will always be expected to model good conduct. As part of their BEST enrollment, everyone will follow these expectations to set a good example:

- Individuals shall not discriminate against each other for any basis or reason.
- Individuals who are “participants” will follow City of Tempe rules during their employment. They will understand consequences for not following the rules.
- Individuals will follow the agreement they initial in the application packet about behavior expectations (e.g., treating others with respect/kindness).
- Individuals will be cooperative with the program coordinator. This includes working with the coordinator during all phases of their involvement with BEST.

City of Tempe staff who work with BEST program applicants and/or participants will:

- Work and communicate with the program coordinator.
- Attend trainings to help promote work relations with participants.
- Follow what is taught in these trainings (e.g., role of job coaches).
- Respect the confidentiality and boundaries of applicants/participants.

Program Procedures: Steps and Processes Involved

There are two stages to the BEST program's process:

Stage 1: Initial application

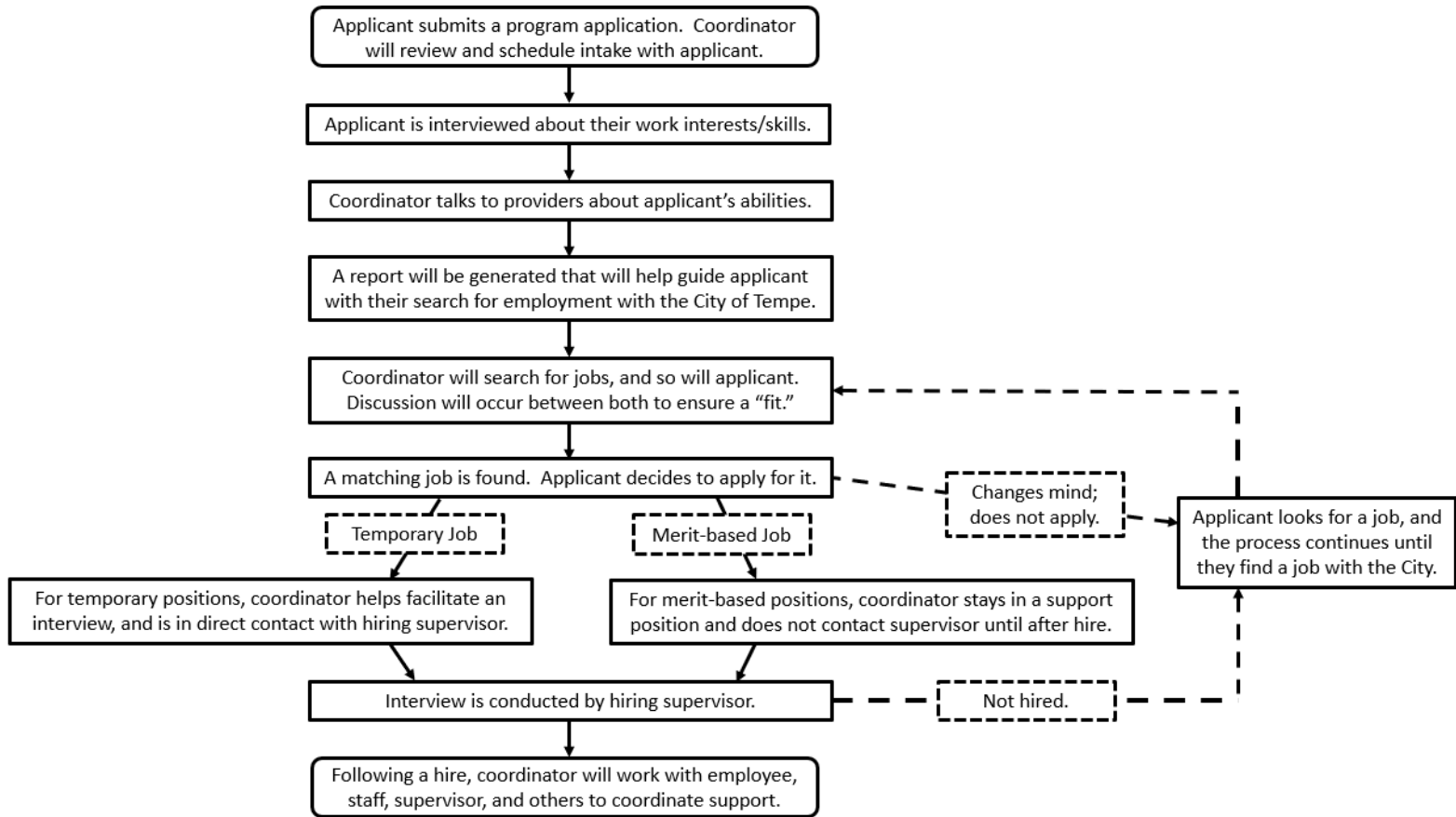
1. Applicants complete the BEST program application and submit it to the coordinator, who will review the paperwork and schedule an intake interview with the applicant.
2. Applicant will be interviewed by the coordinator about their strengths, weaknesses, skills, and career interests. Family members are welcome to join and provide additional information. Legal guardians' involvement and cooperation are required.
3. The coordinator will consult with a professional who knows the applicant's strengths and weakness (e.g., a vocational rehabilitation counselor), and collect skills-related information to complete a composite report about the applicant.
4. The report will note the completion of the "Discovery Process" for applicant. It will contain up to three job types that will guide both the applicant and the coordinator in recommending City of Tempe jobs the applicant should apply for using the city's website.
5. The coordinator will gain agreement from the applicant and professional about the contents of the report. A copy of the signed report will be given to applicant.

(When a stated vocational goal is clearly supported by an applicant's work history and/or an opportunity is available for the applicant to apply for a job, they can waive doing a signed report by signing the necessary form.)

6. The coordinator will check for jobs on the City of Tempe's website at least once a week. Any applicable job leads will be sent to the applicants to consider. The job leads will be appropriate for the applicants based on their skills and interests. Applicants can look for jobs and discuss with the coordinator potential jobs.
7. There are two ways the coordinator can help facilitate an application:
 - For temporary position applications, the applicant fills out the application and submits it directly to the coordinator. The coordinator contacts the supervisor and if necessary, explains the purpose of the BEST program while submitting the applicant's application. Tempe's Human Resources is given notice of the application submission, so they may also contact the supervisor about the City's "Employment First" initiative and if applicable, address any questions the supervisor may have about the process.
 - For regular status, merit-based competitive positions, the applicant completes their own application online, and notifies the coordinator once submitted. The coordinator contacts Tempe's Human Resources to notify them of a forthcoming request for reasonable accommodations, and from whom to expect it. Human Resources will review the application, along with all others received, to determine position eligibility based on the position's posted minimum qualifications.
8. In the event an applicant is deemed eligible and invited for an interview, the coordinator may help facilitate the interview time and schedule (for temporary positions). The coordinator will remind applicant about the city's process to request reasonable accommodations. The coordinator will offer to act as a resource for the hiring supervisor to ask about interviewing tips or disability knowledge (this applies to temporary positions, but not merit-based ones).

(For regular status, merit-based positions, the coordinator will not contact the hiring supervisor until after an offer has been made and accepted by the applicant in order to ensure the integrity of the hiring process.)

Flowchart for BEST Program Initial Application (Stage 1)



(Graphic of flowchart for Stage 1.)

Stage 2: Post-hire process

1. If an applicant is offered a job and hired, the coordinator will discuss their job support needs and any applicable accommodations. Support services will be facilitated and scheduled in coordination with the new hire's supervisor and/or other providers involved with their case.
 - Example: For job coaching provided by the City of Tempe or the participant's primary service agency (e.g., vocational rehabilitation), the coordinator would obtain the needed information, and coordinate support logistics with the participant, the hiring supervisor, and job coach.

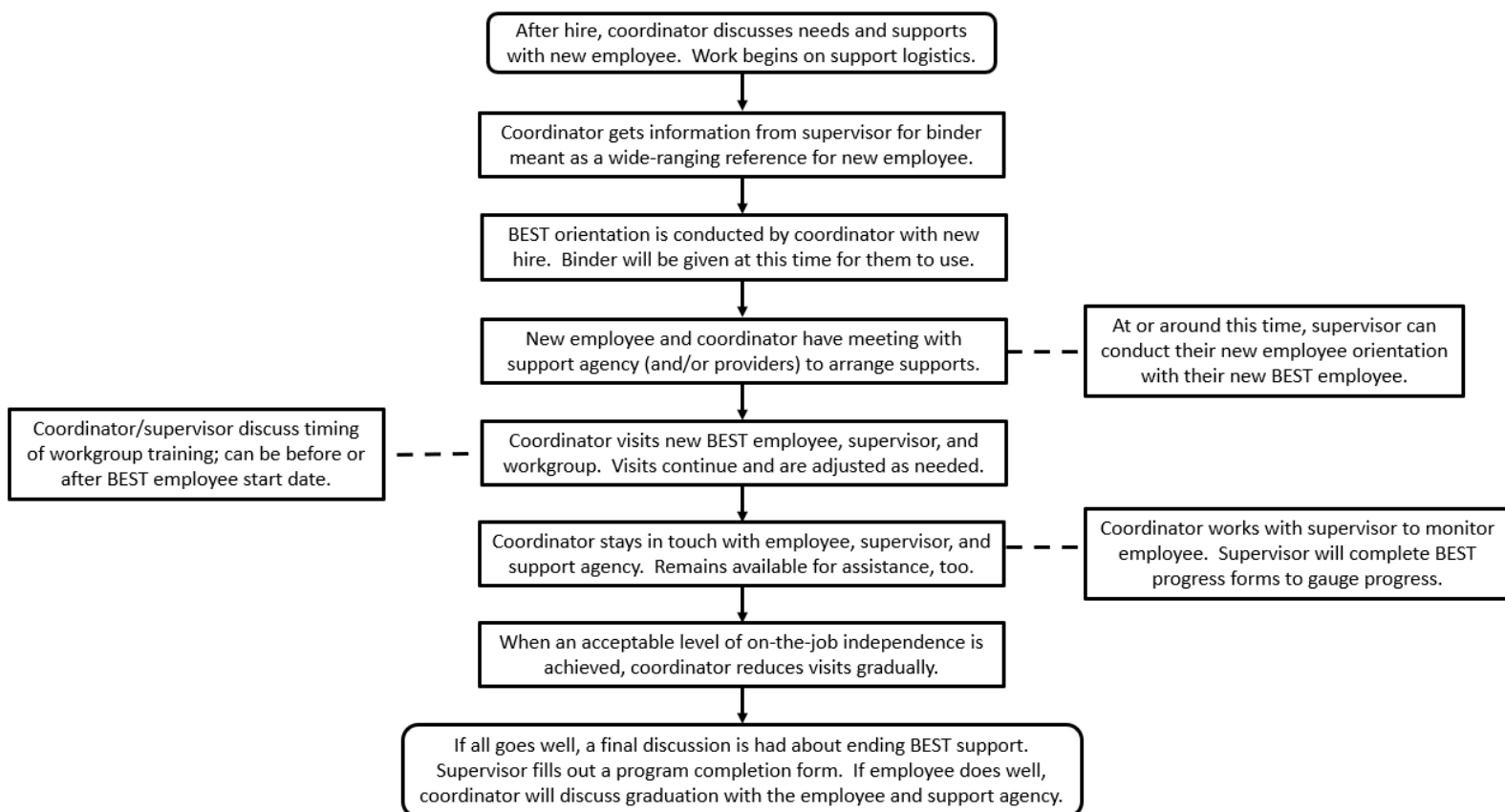
2. The coordinator will discuss with the hiring supervisor details such as wages, work schedules, members of the participant's immediate workgroup, and the necessary contact information to have in case of tardiness or illness.
3. The coordinator will create a binder for the hired participant that summarizes the information given to coordinator by the hiring supervisor. The binder will be given to the participant during their BEST program orientation and contain the coordinator's contact information. The participant will sign a form that indicates they received the binder and understand the contents of the binder materials.
4. The form will also signify the transition of going from applicant to participant.
5. A meeting will be convened between the BEST program coordinator and other personnel (e.g., case manager, counselor) to agree on supports, the roles of people involved, and what will be done to support the participant. This may include job coaching, information and referral, advocacy, and benefits counseling. The coordinator will remain in a consultative role. (The option to do this electronically will exist if people cannot meet on short notice after hire.)
6. The hiring supervisor will be responsible for completing their regular departmental new hire orientation. The supervisor should communicate to the BEST coordinator the new hire orientation details so the coordinator can reinforce the information to the newly hired participant. This step is meant to provide additional support to the new hire.
7. On or close to the participant's start date, the coordinator will visit the new hire's work site, and check in with all individuals (e.g., participant, hiring supervisor, and/or job coach). The coordinator will maintain contact on a regular basis with the goal of reducing the frequency of contacts based on participant progress.
 - Example: A participant may initially be checked in with weekly, along with the hiring supervisor. This may continue for an unspecified period of time, such as a few weeks or a month depending on the participant's progress. Based on team discussions, coordinator will decrease the frequency to once every two weeks and continue with the schedule before dropping the frequency again.
8. The BEST coordinator will arrange a training on disability awareness for the participant's workgroup and hiring supervisor. It will cover job coaches' roles and

how to work with them. Training will be at a location and time/date as agreed on by the hiring supervisor, coordinator, and training personnel.

9. The coordinator will maintain progress notes about each participant. These notes are only for in-program use and will be kept confidential for BEST use.
10. Consultations are to be done as needed or on a pre-determined schedule between coordinator and participant's primary support agency (e.g., vocational rehabilitation). These would cover the participant's progress and development in their new position working for the city. The goal would be to work towards an increased level of independence for the participant with minimal intervention.
11. The coordinator, hiring supervisor, participant's agency, and participant will engage in discussions, as needed, to determine when the participant has reached a satisfactory and sustainable level of work performance with or without supports. When that has happened, a minimum level of contact will be established and maintained. Coordinator, participant, and hiring supervisor will maintain contact.

(A flowchart for the Stage 2 process is on the next page.)

Flowchart for BEST Program Post-Hire Process (Stage 2)



(Graphic of flowchart for Stage 2.)

Important notes

- Hiring supervisors are responsible for the hiring of potential participants. They, in partnership with Tempe Human Resources, are responsible for conducting the hiring process (e.g., background checks, drug tests, polygraphs).
- The BEST program coordinator can assist in a supportive role as far as notification to the applicant regarding the scheduling of interviews as well as the facilitation of any internal/external supports (e.g., job coaching). Human Resources will assist with providing reasonable accommodation resources when applicable, although the coordinator may act as an intermediary if needed.

- In cases of disciplinary action or unsatisfactory performance:
 - As with any employee of the city, the supervisor has complete discretion to act in accordance with established policies, procedures, and guidelines and/or memorandums of understanding (MOUs) in place to address performance issues with program participants. The supervisor should contact the Human Resources to discuss any potential disciplinary action, as they would for any other employee.
 - Supervisors are encouraged to consult coordinator for input that may bear on performance and/or disciplinary situations. If the participant is terminated, the supervisor and/or Human Resources should communicate with coordinator about the participants' status (e.g., disciplined, suspended, or terminated) for program tracking purposes.
 - If the participant's employment is terminated for cause, their participation in the BEST program is revoked. A discharge letter will be sent.
 - Program participants are City of Tempe employees. This means they are subject to City of Tempe conduct rules and policies, procedures, and applicable MOUs. If a participant's behavior is unacceptable during BEST-related activities or towards other individuals, their BEST program participation may be terminated. Additionally, inappropriate interactions or conduct will also be reported to their supervisor. Should a participant's BEST program enrollment be ended, they will lose program benefits even if they remain employed (reasonable accommodations would still apply).
- If a placement does not work out, the participant may agree to voluntarily resign and become an applicant again. The individual would go through the same process as noted in Stage 1 until hired into a different position that may be a better fit.
- Participants will follow all other City of Tempe rules as a City employee.

Program Practices: Guiding Points and Overview

This section covers other facets of the program and its operations:

Data Tracking

For funding purposes, BEST collects demographic data including:

Number of Persons Served	Income Levels
Family Size	Family Composition
Service Units	Disability Information

All data collected is kept confidential and is anonymized where appropriate.

Support Groups

The BEST program offers participants' workgroups and supervisors support from the BEST program coordinator. Support can be informal one-on-one meetings and/or group-based discussions. The meetings would not be about program participants themselves, and instead focus on support-related matters meant to reinforce staff's understanding and knowledge of disability issues. The goal of these meetings is to help staff facilitate a more inclusive and culturally sensitive setting for not just them, but also the participant they work with. Participation is optional and not mandatory.

Confidentiality

- Applicants and participants' communications with the BEST program coordinator will remain confidential. Medical and/or disability information self-disclosed on a voluntary basis to the coordinator will be kept private by the coordinator and program staff.
- The only time the coordinator can and will disclose private information to non-BEST program staff (e.g., supervisors) is when an applicant or participant has given their express consent to coordinator to share strictly for job support.
- All confidential applicant/participant information will be stored electronically or in hard copy either under lock and key or be protected by a computer password.

Graduation

If a BEST participant achieves reasonable self-sufficiency on the job and demonstrates certain on-the-job abilities at a satisfactory level (e.g., being on time, taking instruction, and not requiring excess supervision on the job), BEST may discuss graduation from the program. This would involve consultations with the participant's workgroup, supervisor, and as appropriate, their support agency personnel (e.g., counselor, case manager). If a participant has a legal guardian, they will be involved. The supervisor will score the participant using a rating sheet provided by the BEST program coordinator. If they are given a score of 80% or above, they will be graduated if they agree they are ready for graduation. After graduation, the participant will not receive further formal support from the BEST program but can still request a consultation with the coordinator.

Transitional support may be provided to graduates for up to 60 days. This support will largely include information and referral services; however, the BEST program coordinator can provide logistical support as needed. During this time of transition, the BEST program coordinator will discuss with the graduate the option to re-enter the program for increased support to ensure their continued success as an employee if necessary. If the graduate agrees to re-entry, all relevant parties (e.g., support agencies) will be contacted to partner again. (See also: "Re-entry.")

Should the program participant feel they are ready for graduation but the BEST program coordinator does not agree (based on their own observations, input from the supervisor and/or support agencies), the participant will be allowed an opportunity to leave the BEST program voluntarily. They will be presented with a form to sign indicating their choice. If they refuse to sign, coordinator will note the refusal and write "refused to sign" on the form. By leaving the BEST program prematurely, they remain a City of Tempe employee, but will not receive continued support or a future consultation with BEST. For participants who have a legal guardian, the guardian decides for them. Participants who leave early can still receive VR support (if they are already receiving it), but without on-site support from BEST. Supervisors may still consult with the BEST program as a general resource.

Re-entry

If a BEST graduate experiences issues that may jeopardize their employment, they or their guardian can contact the BEST program coordinator about requesting re-entry into the BEST program. The employee's supervisor may also contact the coordinator if they

feel the employee would benefit from re-entry. With the consent of the BEST graduate (and/or guardian if appropriate), the coordinator will speak with the supervisor.

If re-entry is deemed appropriate by the BEST Program staff, the coordinator will open a file for the graduate, and arrange for the necessary supports to assist the employee. If a BEST graduate resigns on good terms and wants to re-enter the program, they can fill out an application. For graduates who are terminated from their job after graduation, re-entry will not be granted in most situations. An exception may be made if a support agency writes a letter supporting their re-entry and why they should be considered.

Contact Information

Max Ryser, BEST Program Coordinator

E-mail: max_ryser@tempe.gov

Phone: (480) 401-5631

Mary Mezey, Human Services Supervisor

E-mail: mary_mezey@tempe.gov

Phone: (480) 350-5448